

The Chronicle and Index

OF THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY.

No. 88, Vol. viii.]

BELFAST, APRIL 1st, 1888.

[For Gratuitous Circulation.]

THE Rev. J. C. Street will be glad to receive contributions in aid of the gratuitous publication of the *Chronicle and Index*.

WE are glad to make the following announcements about the Unitarian Anniversaries:—

The 57th Anniversary of the Unitarian Society, with which is united the Northern Sunday School Association, will take place at *Easter* as follows:—

The ANNUAL SERMONS will be preached in the *Church of the Second Congregation* on Easter Sunday, April 1st, morning and evening, and in the afternoon (3 o'clock) at Moneyrea, by the Rev. SILAS FARRINGTON, of Manchester; and collections will be made in aid of the funds of the Society.

The WELCOME BREAKFAST will take place in the Lombard Hall on Monday morning, April 2nd, at 9.30 o'clock. The Rev. THOS. DUNKERLEY, B.A., will preside. Tickets, 2s. each, to be had at the Depository, Queen's Arcade.

The ANNUAL MEETING will be held in the Church of the Second Congregation on Tuesday evening, April 3rd, at 7.30 p.m. John R. Neill, Esq., will preside. The report for the year will be presented, and committees for next year appointed.

In addition to the Rev. S. Farrington, of Manchester, other gentlemen from different parts of the United Kingdom are expected to take part in the Anniversary proceedings. We hope our friends of town and country will co-operate in making the meetings successful.

WE are glad to announce that the Rev. T. Dunkerley, B.A., is our representative at the

great meetings of the Manchester District Sunday School Meetings, held on Good Friday, as usual.

THE following were the subjects of the Rev. J. C. Street's lectures on the Sunday evenings in March:—

The New Creed of the Baptist Union.
Sects.
The Army of God.
Captains of Salvation.

THE Monthly Religious Service for the Young was held in Rosemary Street School on Sunday morning, March 4th, when the Rev. J. C. Street spoke on "Heaven here, and hereafter." There was a good attendance of teachers and scholars.

SOME important changes are about to be made in the work of the Unitarian Society. The Depository in the Queen's Arcade is to be closed. Nearly all the literature needed by our schools and people can now, we are happy to say, be obtained from the regular book-sellers, and ordinary Unitarian literature can be got from the Depository in Rosemary Street. In these circumstances the Unitarian Society, which hopes to keep a book-room in the school-room of the Second Congregation, will undertake to supply such books of advanced religious thought as cannot be purchased elsewhere. It will also circulate our denominational literature as usual. But it will, in addition, publish such tracts, leaflets and other literary matter as may help the good work of enlightenment and promote spiritual religion. In addition to

this, it will seek to aid mission work and to nourish our Sunday-schools. We hope a higher career lies before the Unitarian Society of Belfast.

VERY interesting were the meetings of the Rosemary Street Mutual Improvement Association since our last issue. The following subjects were on the programme:—

On Earth Peace. Mr. Geo. Fisher.

Some of the Sacred Books of the World.
Mr. J. H. Gilliland.

The Humours of a Rambler. Mr. H. Riddell, M.E.

Woman. Mr. C. J. Knox.

DR. CROSSKEY'S manual on "The Method of Creation"—one of the series of Biblical manuals published by the Sunday School Association—is of singular interest and value. From a pen like his we should naturally expect an attractive book. This is as useful as it is attractive. It deals reverently with the narrative of Genesis; but it opens out the Divine method of creation in a way which is free from ancient errors, and is in full harmony with the latest revelations of science. The new generation will have a higher guidance in cosmogony than any of its predecessors. The manual is published for a shilling.

HOW I LEFT ORTHODOXY.

BY JAMES C. STREET.

"BRIGHTER OUTLOOKS! THE WILDERNESS BLOSSOMING AS THE ROSE. NO CASTES, BUT UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD."

No. 6—*Continued.*

I took sides at once in the great controversy of humanity. I had no more words to say about equality. That nonsense dropped from me in face of evidence that compelled a different conclusion. But I had got hold of the truth of God's Fatherhood. It laid its majestic and irresistible hand upon me. It mastered me by its omnipotence. With it I went out to the solution of my problem. If men were not all equal they were all *brothers*. Mental power, moral qualities, outward circumstances might

be widely different, but these in no sense altered the supreme fact. *That* remained stamped in the nature of every human being. I extended my thought until it reached out to the very confines of humanity, and gathered within its scope every order and condition of men,—men of all creeds and ranks, men of every colour and language, men of all ages and climes,—it comprehended the weakest as well as the strongest, the simplest as well as the wisest, the child in thought and the profoundest philosopher. Beneath this variety ran the current of one blood; the different dialects of the tongue left the language of the heart the same; when I gazed upon the face of a man I found it was the face of a brother, and the diversities among us were the picturesque peculiarities of our condition calling forth close and intertwining duties which should link us into an unbroken unity. The artificial distinctions of the world, and the more arbitrary distinctions made by the Church, lost all their force and prestige; beneath the outward conditions of rank and circumstance, and of saint and sinner, I came upon the sublime fact of man, and the lofty truth of Brotherhood. I could look down upon no man, I could not be false or unjust to any man, I could not presume to affirm superiority to any man, nor on the other hand could I allow any man to look down upon me, to arrogate superiority over me, or to presume to assert lordship over me. Myself a man, I recognised manhood, I could not scorn it, no matter how mean or sinful any particular man might be. I could scorn his meanness, I could loath his wrong doings, I could blaze into indignation against his falseness, but the man himself, below and above all this was my brother, the child of my Father, and I owed to him my love, and service. Robert Nicoll's words had a real meaning to me.

"I may not scorn the meanest thing
That on the earth doth crawl,
The slave who dares not burst his chain,
The tyrant in his hall.

The vile oppressor who hath made
The widow'd mother mourn,
Though worthless, soulless, he may stand—
I cannot, dare not scorn.

The darkest night that shrouds the sky
 Of beauty hath a share;
 The blackest heart hath signs to tell
 That God still lingers there.

I pity all that evil are—
 I pity and I mourn;
 But the Supreme hath fashioned all,
 And, O! I dare not scorn."

So, in the course of my spiritual pilgrimage, I came upon the revelation of a Universal Brotherhood. Henceforth castes were unknown to me, artificial distinctions in no way marred my outlook upon man—everywhere I saw my *Brothers*. But with this great revelation of Brotherhood came clear and resonant the call of *duty*. Among my brothers was want, and ignorance, and sin, and suffering; their plaints were heard in every quarter of the world; at my doors, in the neighbouring streets, in hospital, and workhouse, in gaol and fever-den, in home and garret; the barefooted and ragged children swarmed in our lanes and alleys, women were toiling their lives away in mill and forge and factory, famine looked out of the eyes of the poor, fever burnt life away with its fierce fires, pestilence swept over the miserably fed and clad, and all these were my brothers and sisters. I might not stand idly by. I could not fold my arms and be indifferent. I could not turn aside or close my ears and let all this misery go on without some effort on my part to relieve and remove it. Nay, I felt that my own sonship to God was my commission to serve His children, that through me and others He meant to bless these feeble lambs of His fold, and I understood what Jesus meant when he said "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of these least ones, my brethren, ye have done it unto me." From henceforth religion was associated in my mind with charity, benevolence, and goodwill.

Through his own children I saw that God was working for the good of his whole family. The means he used to reach man was men. Through men he spoke to the world, and proclaimed his Fatherhood. Through men he made known the ties of Brotherhood. I now saw that my work was to lie in seeking, and helping, and saving the wanderers and the lost. So I

laid myself out for the duty which was made known to me. I had to work for others, to give myself to human service, to live for the world. A great ideal rose before me. I would be one of those who consecrated themselves to bless mankind. I would give up earthly aims and ambitions. I would deliberately turn aside from paths that would lead to wealth, rank and honour, and I would choose a work where I could help, teach, advise, uphold, guide, cheer, and inspire my brothers. It seemed a glorious mission. I have never risen to the height of my ideal. I have failed to do one-half of what I ought to have done, and the picture of what my life should have been still shines with all its lovely colourings before me. But I never faltered in my path or altered my aim. I respond as well as I can to the calls of suffering and sin, and my Father's hand still guides me to labour among the miseries of His children. When I knew that I was His son, and that all men were my brethren, I also knew that I was to spend myself in their service, to live and to die for them.

So the new truth of man's brotherhood was creative. It called into existence new aims and ambitions, it created philanthropy and charity, it opened out a path of comprehensive salvation.

"The first real, earnest, religious faith that shall arise upon the ruins of the old worn out creeds will transform the whole of our actual social organisation, because every strong and earnest faith tends to apply itself to every branch of human activity; because in every epoch of its existence the earth has ever tended to conform itself to the heaven in which it then believed, and because the whole history of humanity is but the repetition in form and degree, varying according to the diversity of the times, of the words of the prayer, "Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven" (Mazzini).

So the doctrine of brotherhood sends us out to a life of Beneficence, and helps to prepare the children of earth for the home in Heaven.

"STILL GRANDER PROSPECTS. NO PARTIAL RESCUE,
BUT UNIVERSAL SALVATION."

No. 7.

"O yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill,
To pangs of nature, sins of will,
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood;

That nothing walks with aimless feet;
That not one life shall be destroyed,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete."

—TENNYSON.

"Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.—Isaiah xlv. 17.

The observing traveller on life's path always sees something new. The world is full of surprises. Even the old roads that we have trodden so long, and every step of which we thought we knew, seem ever to keep ready for display fresh treasures and delights. One discovery leads to another, until we are ready to say that the wonders of the little world about us are as varied and startling as the wonders unveiled to our enraptured gaze by the telescope of the astronomers.

The mountaineer who toils upwards towards Alpine heights, when not too weary with his journey, while inspired by the thought that ere long he shall reach the loftiest peak, and be able to stand above the mass of snow-crowned summits, can at passing intervals pause to rest and look around with wonder and delight upon the glorious prospect spread out before him, and rejoice that all the long toilsome path on which he travelled now seems to lie so clear and bright beneath his eye; and that scenes through which he passed, but could not fully see, now lie serene and tranquil before his vision; while new reaches stretch out temptingly before him, and new delights invite his onward steps.

Thus it is also with the spiritual pilgrim. Old paths and scenes grow more beautiful and attractive; old words take new meanings and colourings; fresh thoughts crowd into the ancient imagery; and revelations seem to await every step. And when the step is on the heights, and each new impulse carries the

wayfarer into purer air and clearer light, it appears as if the world of thought were boundless, and every path led into infinity.

I know that this is the experience of the man who travels away from old superstitions and comes every day into the clearer light of science, and of the religious inquirer who leaves the fortress of dogma and authority and treads with glad steps the moorland heights of freedom and communes face to face with God.

As I turn back from time to time to see the road I have travelled I realise, as I cannot do without such retrospect, how great my gains have been and how needful it is that I should still press forward, untiring in my upward journey, that I may reach more sunny heights, and gaze into still wider regions of this wondrous universe of God.

I have now left behind me the fatalism of Calvinism, and the impotence of Methodism. I am no longer oppressed with the feeling that I must submit to the authority of any earthly teachers, and I am more than half emancipated from the tyranny of a Book. I have found that the dogma of Hell is a mere nightmare of the superstitious or a cruel whip of ecclesiastics. God has emerged out of the unbending sternness of fatalism, and the weak impotence of the Arminians, and I have found Him to be my Father and the Father of mankind, and, as I have gazed upon His Fatherhood, castes, distinctions, and divisions among mankind have faded away, and I have seen, in the clear light of day, that all men are brethren.

From this great height I turn to gaze around that I may learn what lessons may be gained, and what new treasures God has in store for me.

And as I look, still grander prospects rise before me, and with jubilant heart I go forward to this new and lofty quest.

I have found God's Fatherhood and Man's Brotherhood. And God's Almightyness and Love have been borne in upon me with resistless force. I see no limitations to either. I cannot see how limitations are possible. I also see diversities in the conditions and lots of mankind. The variety in their lives is at least as wonderful as is their unity and

brotherhood. I have to find in some way how to understand this, how to make it consistent with the Almighty Fatherhood, and in keeping with boundless love.

Is it possible that I can do this on the supposition that any human being is to be forever lost? If all the ninety-and-nine are safe, will that complete the solution of the problem if the one is still left out in the wilderness?

I know that for a long time I puzzled over this problem, and it involved me in mazes of misery. Light came to me when I heard that God desired that all men should be saved, but it faded away again when I found that His desire was not to be realised. I felt the benevolence and naturalness of the wish, but the lameness of the result sent me back despairing. There was nothing complete or satisfactory in this, and I felt that a different solution must be sought and found.

As I went out on my search two formidable questions confronted me, questions that must be answered, and that must be so definitely answered that never afterwards should I have to go back to consider them. Both these questions involved the supreme matter of authority.

Two forms of authority still blocked my way, though I had broken both with tradition and my human teachers. Up to now I found myself always asking what saith the Scriptures? and when I found, as I sometimes thought I did, that the Scriptures were not always clear or in full agreement, I then asked "what saith Christ?"

I had not come distinctly face to face with that other and even more stern form of authority which says, "what saith the Church?" This I had to face later on, and when it was faced it shared the same fate as the two forms of authority with which I had now to deal.

In my world the Scriptures held a place unique, unapproachable, and supreme. They were spoken of as "God's Revelation," "God's Word." Any word from those pages was final. There could be no mistake. It mattered not whether we turned to Old Testament or New. Prophet and apostle was alike infallible. Moses and Paul spoke as God taught them; they were

only human instruments. Their words conveyed God's thoughts. When they spoke God spoke. This was the creed I was taught. This was the creed I believed. It seemed beyond the region of question or doubt. It was simply axiomatic.

When first a doubt arose in my mind I felt guilty. It seemed like letting in the waters of destruction, and I feared I should be overwhelmed. I certainly did not want to doubt. It seemed so natural and so simple to have before me a book written by God, telling me His will, and showing me what He wished me to do. In any difficulty or perplexity I had only to turn to these pages and find therein the guidance I needed. And times without number I did turn to these pages. I hunted up passages. I consulted concordances. I studied harmonies. For some time these pleasant studies helped me, and I found myself saying that "new light was breaking out of God's word." But my study and inquiry and references were the beginning of my difficulties, and the steps leading to my freedom. Gradually I began to see that I was not reading one Book but two Books. I saw the Jewish Bible and the Christian New Testament. They were bound together and called "The Bible," or the "Holy Scriptures," or "Scripture;" but it was easy to see that the Jewish part of the volume was, in many respects, different from the Christian part. They did not always agree. The lessons taught were not the same. Indeed, I found that the Christian part of the volume seemed to set aside, or ignore, or condemn a good deal that was in the Jewish writing. And yet I noticed that in the enforcement of certain lessons or teachings many preachers quoted indiscriminately from either part of the volume and always spoke of the passage quoted as God's word. I myself did this. When I asked myself "what says the word of God?" I found myself quoting Moses or Paul, Isaiah or Matthew, David or John. My habit was the habit of those around me. It is still the habit of the majority of those who speak of the Bible as the word of God. But by degrees I began to notice a difference. I found that in some sense it was

held that the Jewish part of the volume dealt with what God had spoken; but that the Christian part dealt with what God is speaking. At first this did not present a difficulty. I supposed that God might speak differently at different times. I did not then understand what I now understand, that God's law and word are perfect and cannot change, that truth cannot be out of harmony with truth, that God's word must ever be self-harmonious. I stumbled along my way. As I found that there was diversity between the two parts of the volume I explained them by the theory that the Old belongs to the past, and was now of no authority, and that the New was the living word of God. Notwithstanding this I found myself frequently turning to the glowing words of the Psalmist or the Prophets when I wanted to find the loftiest religious language. Prayer surged up for me in the words of the ancient Hebrew, and I sang my rejoicings and thanksgivings in the Temple Psalms. But the discovery that the Bible was made up of two parts, and that the later was supposed to be of the higher authority was only the beginning of my perplexity and enlightenment. As I looked closer I found that each of these two parts was itself divided, that each part was not one Book but many Books, that there were many authors, who belonged to different periods, wrote independently of each other, had different aims, used different methods, and, more wonderful than all, taught different lessons. I found that my Bible was not a book, but a literature—not the continuous, progressive, harmonious word of God, but the story of the thought and life, the sin and suffering, the failures and triumphs, the songs and histories, the dramas and dreams of a people of remarkable character and spirituality, telling of their ups and downs, their defeats and victories, their hopes and disappointments, their exultation and despair. As all this was borne in upon me, and I realised that I was looking at the work of men, and reading what men had written for men I felt that my Authority was slipping away from me, and I understood, what had so perplexed me before, why there were contradictions and differences in this sacred

volume. It was no longer the puzzle how it was possible that God could contradict Himself; or how He could leave Himself to be misunderstood by those to whom He was writing. I now saw that the differences were human. I had often felt the strangeness of the fact that God had spoken in His word, and that His children all disagreed as to His meaning. It did not seem like God. I felt that He ought to be able to speak in such tones that all mankind should hear, and in such terms that everyone should understand. And yet I knew that the Bible only reached a fragment of humanity, and that those who heard were at variance as to what it taught. The infallible Book evidently needed an infallible Interpreter. The Protestant Churches had no such interpreter, and the Catholic Church presented the spectacle of infallibility for ever at war with itself. All these difficulties dropped out of my way as I learned that the Bible was a Human Literature, and was subject to all the conditions of such literature. I could now turn to its pages with a new feeling and a livelier interest. On all the momentous questions of religion, common to the heart of man the world over, it was a matter of moment to know what earnest and devout men had thought and felt. But this was very different from the old feeling I had respecting the Bible. I found I had insensibly lost an authority, but I had found a helper. What it said was still prized and realised by me, but it no longer dominated my mind and made me bow before it as before an Infallible Tribunal. When I had arrived at this conclusion I found myself more free to judge, discriminate, and decide than had ever been the case before.

My second difficulty then arose—what about the authority of Christ?

I noticed that as the controversy about authority grew hotter and more intense the battle ground was insensibly shifted. At *first* every word of the Bible, Old Testament and New, was inspired—the direct and infallible word of God—then the Old was quietly left in abeyance or relegated to a historical position, recording an inspiration of the past and not binding upon the present, and *next* as a want

of harmony appeared among the apostles and evangelists, and it was found difficult to discover a unity in the teachings of the different books, a *new* issue was raised into the front rank of controversy. Paul and Peter might differ. John and Matthew might have different ideals—a wide contrast might be found between John of the Gospel and John of the Apocalypse, but there could be no difference in Christ. He must be ever the same. He was the undoubted messenger of God. He had a special, supernatural mission. His word was final. Beyond him no one need look or go. He was himself “the living word of God.” And so the problem narrowed itself down to the authority of Christ. Of course I saw with wonderment the different estimates put upon the rank and status of this “man of Nazareth,” and found in that a source of bewilderment and trouble. Some looked upon him as God Himself. Others spoke of him as existing from all eternity—like God, but not equal to God. Others again believed him to be a supernaturally born and endowed being—made like man, but higher than man—sent as God’s ambassador, armed with the powers of a Divine plenipotentiary and speaking only as God directed; while others called him a man, asserted that his birth and life were in all respects like those of other men, and that the powers he possessed came from character, genius, devoutness, and fidelity. But all those turned with eagerness to his words, and most of them were prepared to accept his words as of binding authority. But alas for authority! Even his words were differently reported. There were four records. Three of them had much in common, and in many respects were substantially identical, though in various details they differed, and it was impossible to reconcile their differences. But the fourth record—that which is ascribed to John—differed almost *in toto* from all the rest. His words in this record were different in type, character, and tone from his words as reported by the other evangelists. Great efforts were made to reconcile these four Gospels, but all proved ineffectual. The differences were radical and irreconcilable. So, before I could get at the words of Christ, to determine anything by

his sayings, I had to settle in my mind which presentment of him seemed to have the most verisimilitude. When I referred to Christ did I mean the Christ of the Synoptics or the Christ of John? I read carefully—compared the opinions and conclusions of scholars, examined anxiously and in detail for myself—studied the English translations and the Greek originals, and at length came to the conclusion that the historical personage whose life and work, growing out of Judaism, gave birth to what is called Christianity, was the one whose words and deeds were recorded by Matthew, Mark, and Luke; and that the picture presented in the fourth Gospel was ideal, poetical, and fanciful, having only the slightest basis of historic justification.

So far my way was cleared. I had not to perplex myself with the dreamy metaphysics of John, but could examine into the problem of Christ’s authority under the guidance of the simple historians of the earlier narratives.

(To be continued.)

DAY AND EVEN.

BY FRANZ BRADWELL.

All yesterday the ceaseless rain
Beat noisily against the pane;
No azure of the bending sky
Relieves the gray monotony,
But dreary rain and threatening cloud
Cover the earth with leaden shroud.

Such was the day.

’Tis so in life’s uncertain ways.
How many are the rainy days?
Ah, often when there’s gloom on high,
Our heart takes pattern from the sky,
And is cast down with weight of sin,
That causes gloom and storm within.

Such is our life.

But yester eve, when day was done,
In glory sank the setting sun;
Its colors touched the sky with gold
And dyed with hues so manifold
That perfect arch that brightened heaven,
And brought to mind God’s promise given.

Such was the even.

So in our hearts conflicting storm,
Though dark the clouds of varied form,
The sunset and the rainbow's hue
Will cleave the gloomy heavens through,
Yet leave enough of leaden sky
Our life's sunset to beautify.
Ah, such is death!

THE Treasurer of the Unitarian Society begs to acknowledge receipt of the following subscriptions for 1887:—

T. L. Marshall, Belfast	..	0	10	0
J. R. Miniss, J.P., Dromore	..	0	10	0
W. A. Adamson, Carrickfergus	..	0	2	6
J. E. Adamson,	..	0	2	6
Jas. Logan,	..	0	2	6
R. Magill,	..	0	2	6
R. W. Gordon, J.P., Belfast	..	0	5	0
J. Kinnear,	..	0	2	6
W. W. Drummond,	..	0	2	6
A. J. Milligan,	..	0	2	6
Miss Miniss,	..	0	2	6
J. Steele,	..	0	2	6
J. Montgomery,	..	0	2	6
J. M'Williams,	..	0	2	6
W. J. Pirrie,	..	0	10	0
G. W. Wolfe,	..	1	1	0
Rev. T. Dunkerley, Comber	..	0	10	0
Blakley Orr,	..	0	2	6
Jas. Milling,	..	0	2	6
Dr. Polley,	..	0	2	6
Rev. J. A. Kelly, Rademon	..	0	2	6

Rosemary Street Mutual Improvement Association.

SIXTEENTH SESSION, 1887-88.

The Committee have the pleasure of announcing the following

PROGRAMME FOR APRIL, 1888.

1888.		
April	2—No Meeting—Easter Monday.	
"	9—"A Trip to Killarney,"	 Mr. Edward Watson.
"	16—"The Future State,"	 Mr. James Shone.
"	23—Short Original Papers,	 Members and Friends.
"	30—Annual Business Meeting and Soiree.	

The Meetings are held on MONDAY EVENINGS at Eight o'clock, in the Rosemary Street Schools.

MEMBER'S SUBSCRIPTION.—4s. per annum, which entitles to the use of the Library. Subscriptions for the Sixteenth Session are now due and should be paid to the Treasurer, D. BULMER, 32, Queen Street, as early as possible.

The Library will be open at 1 p.m. on Sundays, and on every Monday Evening during the Session.

ALEX. MILLIGAN, } Hon.
J. H. GILLILAND, } Secs.

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